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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 3 May 1991, at 6.30 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 6.30 p.m.

PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION (continued) (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5 and CRP.6)

1. The CHAIRMAN, replying to comments made at the 10th meeting, said that the Bureau would meet before the organizational session on 5 June in order to consider, jointly with the Secretariat, the issues that had been raised. The other points dealt with in document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.6 would be taken up at the organizational session scheduled for February 1992.

2. Ms. KITTANI (Assistant Secretary of the Board), replying to the question asked by the United States representative at the preceding meeting concerning document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5, said that the alternates to the sessions of the joint committees would be designated in the order in which they were elected. In addition, the proposed inter-sessional meetings would be open to all members and observers.

3. The CHAIRMAN proposed the adoption of document E/ICEF/1991/CRP.5. If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Board agreed to the proposal.

It was so decided.

STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMEN OF THE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE AND THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE (E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.13; E/ICEF/1991/P/L.44)

4. Mr. WARD (Chairman of the Committee on Administration and Finance) introduced the report of the Committee on Administration and Finance contained in document E/ICEF/1991/AB/L.13.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Board wished to adopt the report of the Committee on Administration and Finance.

It was so decided.

6. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Chairman of the Programme Committee), introducing the report of the Programme Committee in document E/ICEF/1991/P/L.44, said that several changes needed to be made in the document.

7. In paragraph 1 (e) of the draft recommendation contained in paragraph 3, the figure of $45,250,000 should be replaced by $57,010,000, since the resources allocated for the International Child Development Centre had not been included in the original amount.

8. In the eighth line of that paragraph, $5 million should be replaced by the figure $7 million, since the Programme Committee had decided to raise further the ceiling of the Emergency Reserve Fund.

(Mr. Fernandez)

9. In paragraph 4, subparagraphs (c), (f), (i) and (l) should be deleted, since those recommendations had emerged from the general debate and had not been submitted to the Programme Committee for its approval.

10. Paragraph (g) should read "Accelerated programme implementation to meet the needs of children and their families in countries most affected by the Gulf crisis."

11. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Executive Board wished to adopt the report of the Programme Committee.

It was so decided.

12. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Board) requested delegations to communicate to the Secretariat within two weeks any comments and amendments they wished to see included in the final text of the two reports which had been adopted.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.26, 29, 32 and 36)

13. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Executive Board should adopt draft recommendations E/ICEF/1991/CRP.26 (Action to assist the least developed countries), E/ICEF/1991/CRP.29 (The fight against cholera) and E/ICEF/1991/CRP.32 (Reaching the poorest). If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Executive Board wished to adopt those draft recommendations.

It was so decided.

14. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Executive Board should adopt the draft recommendation relating to the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.36). If she heard no objection, she would take it that the Executive Board wished to adopt that draft recommendation.

It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.52)

15. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Board) read out a draft recommendation concerning the provision of emergency assistance to Bangladesh (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.52).

16. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Board wished to adopt the draft recommendation.

It was so decided.

17. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) expressed his Government's gratitude to the members of the Board for their gesture of solidarity.

18. Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director, Programmes) said that the Executive Director had released $1 million to provide immediate emergency assistance to Bangladesh (medicines, oral rehydration salts, water purification tablets, calory-rich foods and other essential items). UNICEF, in cooperation with the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation, had chartered an aircraft to fly an emergency shipment of 30 tons from Copenhagen. In addition, 22 tons of equipment, valued at $150,000, had also been shipped to Bangladesh. The country programme for Bangladesh already included measures for dealing with disasters and 3,000 medical kits had been delivered to the Ministry of Public Health in Bangladesh.

19. UNICEF was also in contact with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and the UNICEF office in Dacca was already working closely with that agency.

20. The Secretary-General had issued an appeal to the international community, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, for his part, had sought funds in the amount of $5 million. The Secretary-General had called upon UNICEF to undertake, in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, an evaluation of emergency relief requirements. UNICEF would spare no effort in rendering assistance to the people of Bangladesh in their terrible ordeal.

CONCLUDING REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (E/ICEF/1991/CRP.54 and E/ICEF/1991/CRP.51)

21. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director), adopting the words used by the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney, at the World Summit for Children, said that the session that was about to end was the one at which the real work would begin. Indeed, it had been a session at which the Board had had to ensure that UNICEF would have the operational direction and the capacity to take full advantage of the leverage for children created by the World Summit and the other momentous developments for children which had occurred in the past year, and to build firm foundations for the achievement for the lofty objectives set at the Summit.

22. The Executive Board had been required to act on proposals on how to carry forward the goals and commitments of the Summit, to provide guidance or clarification on specific issues, and to endorse plans, strategies and commitments in connection with specific programmes, as well as budget estimates and staffing proposals for UNICEF. Together, those proposals would lay the foundations for action by UNICEF in the years ahead.

23. The budget request and the staffing proposals had, admittedly, given rise to some serious disagreement. Nevertheless, those proposals had been the product of serious and hard consideration, reflecting a genuine commitment to optimal management and operational efficiency and prudent budgeting, as well as important elements in the quality of UNICEF activities during the 1990s.

(Mr. Grant)

24. In disagreeing on specific issues, the members of the Board had not just exercised a prerogative but rather they had simply been doing their duty. It was incumbent on the secretariat to be effective in presenting its proposals to the Board, to explain the reasoning behind its proposals and to attempt to convince the Board of their correctness.

25. He feared that the Executive Board was becoming involved in matters of day-to-day management, for example by mandating redeployment to fill an additional post in Geneva, but he took the reservations expressed on the budget estimates and the staffing proposals as a challenge to the Secretariat to innovate, to streamline and to do more with less. It was in that context, he believed, that the reviews that had been requested should be understood.

26. Concerning the comment by the Chairman of ACABQ to the Chairman of the Committee on Administration and Finance that UNICEF staff had already sought the support of certain Governments in order to ensure that members of the Advisory Committee adopted the UNICEF budget estimates, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had assured him that he had no proof that UNICEF staff had acted thus before the Advisory Committee had taken a decision on the budget estimates. The Chairman of ACABQ had, however, criticized UNICEF for resorting to such methods on the occasion of the 1990 Summit and for making an in-house analysis of the observations and recommendations in the Advisory Committee's report after its publication. He believed that UNICEF had been within its rights in both cases and intended to pursue the matter further with the Chairman of ACABQ.

27. At the current session, the Executive Board had passed a record number of resolutions, some 18 in the programme area and a half dozen in administration and finance. Those resolutions would help the secretariat to focus its work in certain areas, intensify it in others, and respond better to needs in still others.

28. In the case of Africa, the Board had asked the secretariat to help the African countries examine their long-term resource requirements for implementing the goals and strategies for the 1990s and to intensify its support for the Bamako Initiative. In Latin America, it had asked the secretariat to respond, together with WHO, to the terrible cholera epidemic that was sweeping the continent.

29. In the Middle East, the secretariat had been asked to accelerate programme implemention to meet the special needs of children and families most affected by the Gulf crisis.

30. In Central and Eastern Europe, the Executive Board had given the secretariat guidelines for alleviating the plight of children, particularly those affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

(Mr. Grant)

31. Asia, where the greatest number of the world's poor now lived, would receive continuing UNICEF attention. In that connection, UNICEF was already responding on the ground to the catastrophe in Bangladesh. It was especially tragic that in an era of such great promise for children, the world was experiencing greater and more widespread suffering than at perhaps any time since the Second World War, notably in Bangladesh, Iraqi Kurdistan, the Middle East in general, Latin America and Africa.

32. Fortunately, there had been positive developments in Angola, South Africa and Central America where the resolution of political conflicts was making it possible to pay more attention to the plight of innocent and vulnerable groups. UNICEF was determined to encourage that trend by working in close cooperation with the competent non-governmental, international and national organizations.

33. The resolution which the Board had adopted on the Convention on the Rights of the Child would enable UNICEF to intensify its efforts on behalf of children in particularly difficult circumstances and to discharge its global responsibilities under that historic bill of rights for children.

34. The resolution on breast-feeding would enable UNICEF to intensify its efforts, in cooperation with WHO, to promote breast-feeding and the goals and strategies outlined in the Innocenti Declaration.

35. The resolution on the Children's Vaccine Initiative, a most appropriate follow-up to the success of the Universal Child Immunization Campaign, would, he hoped, help UNICEF, in cooperation with WHO and other organizations, to achieve major breakthroughs in the development of new and improved vaccines. One prospective breakthrough had just occurred in combating malaria, which claimed the lives of more than a million children each year.

36. Most of the resolutions adopted at the current session had included appeals to donor countries to provide increased support for achieving the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s adopted at the previous session and endorsed by the World Summit for Children. The execution of numerous projects benefiting tens of thousands of women and children depended on such support.

37. There were also resolutions calling on the developing countries to re-examine their national policies, budget allocations and priorities, as part of their commitments under the Plan of Action of the World Summit.

38. Taken together, the resolutions were a means for the Executive Board to provide guidelines, guidance and encouragement to donors, developing countries and the UNICEF secretariat, acting in cooperation with the entire United Nations system. He was grateful to the Board for such guidance.

(Mr. Grant)

39. He wished to pay tribute to the UNICEF family, to each and every staff member in each and every UNICEF office around the globe who had, directly or indirectly, helped bring about the World Conference on Education for All, the early ratification of the Convention on the Rights on the Child, the breast-feeding consultation at the Innocenti Centre and the holding of the World Summit for Children, with its formidable in-country preparatory process and its impressive social mobilization in almost every country. By their actions, they had displayed a spirit of devotion, mutual support and sacrifice rarely found in far-flung bureaucracies. That was because working for UNICEF was more like fighting for a cause than just holding a job or pursuing a career.

40. In that connection, he wished to express his heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Salomon Arazi (Greeting Card Operation, Geneva), Mr. Marcello Bevacqua (Special Representative in Cambodia), Mr. Erich Buenger (Director, Special Assignments), Mr. Bertram Collins (Special Assistant to the Director of the Programme Division), Mr. Gilbert Grunitsky (Programme Officer), Mr. Arthur Porter (supply officer), Mr. Stevan Radojicic (water supply expert) and Mr. Padamjit Singh (Greeting Card Operation), all of whom had retired recently or were about to do so.

41. He also wished to pay tribute to the memory of the following colleagues who had died recetnly: Mr. Daniel Carini (Greeting Card Operation), Mr. Simon Spivac (Project Officer for emergencies) and Mr. Akio Yamashita (Executive Director of the Japanese Committee for UNICEF). Lastly, he paid tribute to Mr. Bernard Gilbert (Senior Project Officer for Water and Sanitation, Hanoi), Mr. Martin Murama (Logistics Officer, Dakar office), Mr. Kidar Nath (gardener, New Delhi office), Mr. Rudolph Hoffman (Deputy Director of the Geneva office), Ms. Asdghik Andonian (Administrative and Finance Assistant, Baghdad office), all the staff of the Bogra zone office in Bangladesh and Mr. Michael Shower (Counsellor to the Executive Director), the 1991 recipients of the new UNICEF Staff Awards, for which they had been nominated by their colleagues and peers.

42. In conclusion, he thanked the Executive Board for having chosen, through the guidelines, programme commitments and budgetary decisions it had adopted, to build for UNICEF the foundations it needed to attain the noble ideals it had set itself in working for children.

43. The CHAIRMAN expressed satisfaction that the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board had, at the current session, combined a critical review of programmes and budgets with a creative and constructive approach. That striving for maximum efficiency was as it should be, for children could not wait. If one lost sight of children, efficiency became meaningless.

44. UNICEF's competence in matters concerning children was now universally recognized. Its knowledge in the areas of maternal and child health, nutrition and other sectors concerning children was relied upon. Having taken up a heavy burden, it could not put it down. When one looked at the overall

(The Chairman)

resources allocated to children, however, far more were needed. The burden of providing resources must be shared more equally among those able to contribute.

45. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the current session would help shape the UNICEF of the future and would be critical for the well-being of children everywhere, especially in the developing countries.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

46. After thanking the Executive Board, the members of the Bureau and the members of the UNICEF secretariat, the CHAIRMAN declared the 1991 session of the Executive Board closed.

The meeting rose at 7.45 p.m.